

Position Paper for the Council of Europe [Committee of Ministers]

The topics which were set on the agenda of the Council of Europe's [Committee of Ministers] meeting are the following: "The Promotion and Protection of Human Rights", "Strengthening the COE's Role in Conflict Prevention and Resolution", and "Legal Cooperation between Council of Europe Member States". The Republic of Slovenia, a strong supporter of human rights demonstrated throughout its 10-year history of independence, stresses the importance of addressing these issues in a manner and duration appropriate to their importance. The Council of Europe desires that European leaders shape a peaceful and unified Europe. Slovenia urges the European countries, whether members or non-members of the EU, to speak with one voice. The Republic of Slovenia values the decisions and agreements of the Council of Europe as highly as the decisions and agreements of the European Union.

I. The Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

The Council of Europe, following its basic goal of increasing respect for human rights, has the obligation to face the problems in connection with the ongoing violations of these fundamental rights. For this purpose the COE proposes the following institutions: The European Court of Human Rights, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Committee for the Equality between Women and Men (CDEG), the Human Rights Cooperation with NGOs, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). The Republic of Slovenia perceives the necessity to consider amending improvements to these institutions in order to make their work more effective. The permanent European Court of Human Rights should have a stronger presence towards the people of the member states of the COE. A growing conscience for the rights of every human being independent of factors like race, sex, colour, nationality etc. should spill over to the overall acceptance of these people in a peaceful and unified Europe. This has to be accomplished by media campaigns, seminars for tolerance etc.

A quota for strengthening women's rights for the purpose of equality in institutions can be considered. But they must have a mental effect, changing not only systems but the way of thinking about gender issues if they were to be effective in changing society.

The Republic of Slovenia decided to establish an ombudsman for the supervision of legal reforms in the area of human rights. Therefore we are ready to implement further measures concerning the promotion of human rights in our country. This ombudsman is a role model for other countries making the transition from former socialist to democratic governmental forms. Their task could constitute control of governmental actions against rights of persons that violate the Hague Convention. Future conflicts are marked by persons whose human rights in the face of torture have to be secured as well, for example the Chechen rebels or persecuted terrorist sympathizers and terrorists themselves. The Republic Slovenia will introduce and support all measures for the improvement of human rights within and beyond its borders following its desire for further integration into the COE and most importantly into the European Union.

II. Strengthening the COE's Role in Conflict Prevention and Resolution

The Republic of Slovenia thinks that the future of conflict prevention and resolution lie in the established active cooperation and partnership agreements between the United Nations body and the Council of Europe's institutions and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The central conflicts in the European region are the crisis in Chechnya, Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Furthermore, there are some smaller conflicting regions, which can be ignited anytime, such as the Balkan area with the Kosovo and Macedonia, the malfunctioning democratic state of Belarus and the interstate conflicts of Spain with the ETA group. The COE's actions should fight further conflicts, portraying the desire of the European states for a prolonged peace process between conflicting parties. Respecting the countries' sovereignty is one principle of the Council's policies, but following the nature and aims of the COE's basic goals for a unified and peaceful Europe, the institution should have the ability to expel members from further meetings until the conditions already agreed upon by the several binding treaties of the COE are met. Slovenia is well aware, considering its own past fight for liberty and sovereignty, of what the weight of the European states can affect. Therefore we see ourselves connected to the drive to liberty and self-determination of former Soviet Union provinces, which we will support morally and as far as necessary. Conflict prevention in our times is closely interconnected with preventing a minority of radical minds from gathering people around religious or ideological causes, which propagandize terror attacks against innocents that do not happen to fit into their perspective or their irrational vision of the world. Those events, such as the Beslan catastrophe, indicate to us the necessity for a sustained evaluation of the insecure areas. This can only be accomplished by precisely working out the crisis factors with the states that are directly and indirectly afflicted.

III. Legal Cooperation between Council of Europe Member States

The Republic of Slovenia regards the cooperation between the member states in the area of law as a basic measure towards realizing the idea of common human rights. Without some set of institutions, that are constantly controlling, protecting and evaluating human rights, the formula of promotion and protection of human rights would be hollow. Slovenia argues that the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) is the backbone of the COE member state cooperation in various fields of law because it serves many conditions under which legal cases and their processing is done accurately and in a suitable time span.

Furthermore, with the aim of a collective legal training and the protection of the rights in face of police actions, the COE shows its sensitivity for the most vulnerable areas where law is applied. A close cooperation between the efforts by the COE and the new established International Criminal Court (ICC) should be pursued and supported not only by the Republic of Slovenia but by the other COE states as well. This ICC comes to a special emphasis, when the world is confronted by persecution and arrest of criminals charged for crimes against humanity. The victims of the terroristic crimes, as seen in Beslan or in the Madrid bombing, need special protection as well which is secured by the European Convention against Terrorism and the Committee of Experts on Terrorism (CODEXTER).

The weakest subjects in the chain of crimes are always children, which the COE should care for in a particular way. Whether it is the unborn child or the children suffering abuse by criminals, the Republic of Slovenia feels itself fully committed towards the aims of children's protection, followed by the COE and the various support programs of the United Nations.